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## Credo's Topic Pages

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## Credo's Topic Pages

10,000 popular research topics. The pages are designed to offer context and vocabulary, subject orientation, and pathways to further exploration. They include simple definitions, encyclopedia entries, tag clouds showing the vocabulary of the topic, images, and a title list of the most common references from subject encyclopedia articles. Content is drawn from Credo Reference and beyond.

The basic Topic Page will be freely accessible on the Web. Libraries that subscribe to Credo Reference may purchase an add-on allowing them to customize each Topic Page with additional library and Web resources. Journal databases, e-books, the online catalog, images, videos, news sources, and more can be added. This is not a one-size-fits-all customization; history topics can be linked to only history resources, religion topics to religion resources, and so on.

I think the Topic Pages would be very useful in the general English composition instruction sessions where students are researching many different topics. I often find myself working with these students to develop an understanding of their topic, like civil rights, and brainstorm for alternate search terms. Credo's Topic Pages makes this task easier. The Civil Rights Topic Page (which I saw in a beta preview) provides users with a 20-word definition and a 1,000-word article from the *Crystal Reference Encyclopedia*. Users can easily format the citation of this article in four citation styles and export in seven different ways. Related terms *affirmative action*, *NAACP*, *racial discrimination*, *citizenship*, and *African-Americans* are displayed in the tag cloud. Recent books, images from two online sources, YouTube videos, and current news articles (on April 30 they were in regard to deceased civil rights icon Dorothy Height) are also displayed. If this Topic Page were connected to a library, additional journal articles, e-books, special collections, and other reference materials would also be listed.

The impetus for Topic Pages surfaced with a 2009 research project from the University of Washington, "Project Information Literacy Progress Report." This report confirmed that students found the research process difficult because they lacked context. They needed the big picture, the language of the topic or discipline, and an easier way to gather content. As a result, a majority of today's researchers are now turning to Wikipedia at some point in the research process. In fact, 70 percent reported using Wikipedia at the beginning of the

Where do I start?" This is often a question that students ask when beginning their research. It's a question that Credo Reference wants to answer with its new product, Topic Pages. Topic Pages offers an all-in-one starting point for more than

research process, according to a second University of Washington study, from March 2010, "How Today's College Students Use Wikipedia for Course-Related Research."

Wikipedia is obviously very easy to find; how will students find the Topic Pages? Credo Reference subscribers can use the traditional access points from their library, Web pages, research guides, or course-management system links in addition to finding the basic Topic Pages on the open Web. Nonsubscribing libraries will also have access through the open Web, but because the Topic Pages provide access to just a few Credo resources, libraries would still need to subscribe to find all of Credo Reference content.

Many of us have subject guides, LibGuides, or other Web sites that gather together resources on a topic. What makes Topic Pages so different are scale and discoverability. First, there are 10,000 Topic Pages, and that's just the beginning. The 10,000 Topic Pages cover 50 percent of the use of Credo Reference, highlighting the most popular research topics, and more pages will follow. Second, Credo will use various search-engine optimization techniques to index the basic Topic Pages in search engines—freely available—and lead users back to the library. (We can only hope that the Topic Page entry will sit right above the Wikipedia entry in a results list!) Credo integrated a geolocation service into Topic Pages that recognizes the IP address of the user and, if matched to a subscribing library, provides immediate access to the customized list of resources from that library. If the IP address is not from a subscribing li-

brary, Credo provides a list of libraries in that geolocation that subscribe to the Credo service. Users can authenticate to their library of choice if they have the credentials. A cookie is placed on each user's computer and allows him or her access to any Credo topic page in the future without authenticating. If users can't get access to any libraries, they still have the basic Topic Page information from Credo. Gale offers a similar geolocation service through its Access My Library product, which is available on the Web and for the iPhone. I discussed AML in the September 15, 2009, Off the Shelf column.

In addition to the great content, Topic Pages have features including sharing pages through social-networking tools, linking to the library's online reference service, and formatting citations in multiple ways. Users may also e-mail, save, and print the page.

Topic Pages are a great solution for the lack of context in research. Mike Sweet, Credo Reference CEO, says, "With the exciting new Credo Topic Pages as a guide, research is made more seamless, taking less effort and delivering more value than ever before." I couldn't agree more.

Sue Polanka is Head of Reference Instruction, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. Her blog, No Shelf Required ([www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired](http://www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired)), deals with issues surrounding e-books.

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